

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1           1.       An anti-stratification-delivery system comprising:  
2                   a multi-zone-refrigeration unit having at least first and second zone  
3                   temperature controllers, the first and second zone temperature controllers are capable of  
4                   being set at different temperatures to establish a temperature gradient in a liquid, the  
5                   temperature gradient being sufficient to cause natural thermal convection within the  
6                   liquid to stir a colloid suspended in the liquid to an approximately uniform colloidal  
7                   suspension; and  
8                   a delivery system configured to dispense the approximately uniform  
9                   colloidal suspension.
- 1           2.       The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 wherein the  
2                   multi-zone-refrigeration unit forms a bottle cavity; and the anti-stratification delivery  
3                   system further comprises a bottle disposed in the bottle cavity, the bottle configured to  
4                   contain the liquid and the colloid.
- 1           3.       The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 further  
2                   comprising a thermal insulator disposed around a portion of the multi-zone-  
3                   refrigeration unit, the thermal insulator configured to insulate the multi-zone-  
4                   refrigeration unit from an outside atmosphere.
- 1           4.       The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 further  
2                   comprising a thermal insulator disposed between the first and second zone temperature  
3                   controllers.
- 1           5.       The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 wherein the  
2                   first and second zone temperature controllers are respective first and second zone  
3                   coolers.
- 1           6.       The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 wherein the  
2                   first zone temperature controller is a zone heater and the second zone temperature  
3                   controller is a zone cooler.
- 1           7.       The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 further  
2                   comprising:

3                   a thermally conductive sleeve disposed in the bottle cavity, the thermally  
4 conductive sleeve configured to be removable from the bottle cavity;  
5                   wherein the bottle is disposed in the thermally conductive sleeve.

1                   8.        The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 7 wherein the  
2 thermally conductive sleeve includes a plurality of thermally conductive portions and a  
3 set of thermal insulators disposed between the thermally conductive portions.

1                   9.        The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 wherein the  
2 delivery system includes

3                   a draw tube configured to dispense the approximately uniform  
4 colloidal suspension, the draw tube having a portion disposed into the bottle and  
5 a portion extending from the bottle, and

6                   a thermal insulator disposed around the portion of the draw tube  
7 extending from the bottle.

1                   10.      The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 wherein:  
2                   the first zone temperature controller includes a first housing having a  
3 first set of channels, the first set of channels being configured to carry a first coolant  
4 having a first temperature; and

5                   the second zone temperature controller includes a second housing  
6 having a second set of channels, the second set of channels being configured to carry a  
7 second coolant having a second temperature.

1                   11.      The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 10 wherein the  
2 first and second housings are aluminum.

1                   12.      The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 10 wherein the  
2 first and second zone temperatures are independently controllable.

1                   13.      The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 wherein:  
2                   the first and second zone temperature controllers are disposed  
3 horizontally adjacent; and  
4                   the temperature gradient is established horizontally across the liquid.

1                   14.      The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 wherein:

2 the first and second zone temperature controllers are disposed vertically  
3 adjacent; and  
4 the temperature gradient is established vertically within the liquid.

1                   15. The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 wherein the  
2 multi-zone refrigeration unit has more than first and second zone temperature  
3 controllers configured to establish the temperature gradient.

1                           17.     A method of dispensing a colloid in liquid, the method  
2 comprising:

3 establishing a temperature gradient in the liquid and the colloid;  
4 mixing the liquid and the colloid by natural thermal convection to an  
5 approximately uniform colloidal suspension; and  
6 dispensing through a dispensing system the approximately uniform  
7 colloidal suspension.

1                   18.     The method of claim 17 further comprising setting a maximum  
2     temperature of the temperature gradient below an upper colloid-chemical-breakdown  
3     temperature.

1                   20. An apparatus for storing, mixing, and dispensing a liquid  
2 solution for a semiconductor processing tool, the apparatus comprising:  
3                   a housing comprising a thermally conductive material, the housing  
4 having at least first and second sections that combine to form a cavity, the first and  
5 second section being configured to be set at different temperatures;  
6                   a thermal insulator comprising a low thermal conductive material, the  
7 thermal insulator separating the first and second section of the housing;  
8                   a lid attached to the housing that is removable to allow insertion and  
9 removal of a bottle from the cavity, the lid comprising an opening to allow for the  
10 insertion of a draw tube into a bottle; and

11 an insulating casing that at least partially surrounds the housing.

1                           22.     The apparatus of claim 21 wherein the bottle is positioned within  
2 the cavity, a first portion of the bottle is in thermal contact with an interior surface of  
3 the first section of the housing and a second portion of the bottle is in thermal contact  
4 with an interior surface of the second section of the housing.

1                   23. The apparatus of claim 21 further comprising a thermal insert  
2 forming another cavity, the thermal insert being positioned within the cavity of the  
3 housing, a first portion of the thermal insert is in thermal contact with an interior  
4 surface of the first section of the housing and a second portion of the thermal insert is in  
5 thermal contact with an interior surface of the second section of the housing, wherein  
6 the bottle is positioned within the cavity of the thermal insert.

1                   25. The apparatus of claim 20 further comprising a heater coupled to  
2 one of the first or second section of the housing and wherein the first and second  
3 section of the housing comprise a fluid passage that allows a temperature controlled  
4 fluid to be circulated throughout the first and second sections of the housing.

1                           27. The apparatus of claims 26 wherein the thermal insulator divides  
2 the housing sidewall into upper and lower vertically oriented portions with respect to  
3 the cavity, and wherein the first section of the housing comprises a bottom portion and

4 the lower portion of the sidewall and the second section of the housing comprises the  
5 upper portion of the sidewall.

1                   28. The apparatus of claim 26 wherein the thermal insulator divides  
2 the housing sidewall and housing bottom into left and right horizontally oriented  
3 portions with respect to the cavity and wherein the first section of the housing  
4 comprises the left portion of the sidewall and bottom, and the second section of the  
5 housing comprises the right portion of the sidewall and bottom.

1                   29. A method for forming an integrated circuit comprising:  
2                   mixing a spin-on-dielectric (SOD) formulation by natural thermal  
3 convection including

4                   exposing a first portion of the SOD formulation to a first  
5 temperature, and  
6                   exposing a second portion of the SOD formulation to a second  
7 temperature, the difference between the first and second temperatures is  
8 sufficient to mix the SOD formulation to an approximately uniform colloidal  
9 suspension;

10                  dispensing the SOD formulation onto a substrate; and  
11                  forming a low-k dielectric layer from the SOD formulation.

1                   30. The method of claim 29 wherein the forming step includes  
2 curing the SOD formulation to form the low-k dielectric layer.

1                   31. The method of claim 30 wherein the low-k dielectric layer has a  
2 dielectric constant below about 3.0.

1                   32. The method of claim 30 wherein the low-k dielectric layer has a  
2 dielectric constant below about 2.0.